

CLEAN VERSION OF PENDING CLAIMS

1. A method for etching at least partially through a metal-containing layer disposed above a substrate, wherein part of said metal-containing layer is disposed below an etch mask and part of said metal-containing layer is not disposed below the etch mask, comprising the steps of:

placing the substrate in an etch chamber;

flowing an etchant gas into the etch chamber;

creating a plasma from the etchant gas in the etch chamber;

etching away parts of the metal-containing layer not disposed below the etch mask, wherein some of the etched away parts of the metal-containing layer is redeposited to form residual sidewall passivation while the substrate is in the etch chamber;

discontinuing the flow of the etchant gas into the etch chamber;

flowing an etch mask stripping gas into the etch chamber;

creating a plasma from the etch mask stripping gas in the etch chamber;

stripping away the etch mask and removing some residual sidewall passivation, while the substrate is in the etch chamber; and

removing the substrate from the etch chamber.

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2. The method, as recited in claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

electrostatically attracting the plasma from the etchant gas to the substrate in the etch chamber; and

electrostatically attracting the plasma from the etch mask stripping gas to the substrate in the etch chamber.

3. The method, as recited in claim 2, wherein the etch chamber is a metal etch chamber.

4. The method, as recited in claim 3, wherein the step of stripping away the etch mask and removing residual sidewall passivation further removes residue from walls of the etch chamber.

5. The method, as recited in claim 4, wherein the etch mask stripping gas comprises oxygen.

6. The method, as recited in claim 5, further comprising the steps of:
placing the substrate in a load lock; and
removing the substrate from the load lock to place the substrate into the etch chamber.

7. The method, as recited in claim 6, further comprising the steps of:
placing the substrate into a corrosion passivation chamber after the substrate has been removed from the etch chamber; and
exposing the wafer to a non-plasma high temperature water vapor.

8. The method, as recited in claim 7, further comprising the steps of:
transferring the substrate from the corrosion passivation chamber to a cooling station;
cooling the substrate in the cooling station; and

transferring the substrate from the cooling station to the load lock.

9. The method, as recited in claim 8, further comprising the step of maintaining a pressure between 1 and 80 millitorr during the etching and stripping steps.

10. The method, as recited in claim 9, further comprising the step of maintaining the substrate at a temperature between 10° and 100° C during the etching and stripping steps.

11. The method, as recited in claim 10, wherein the step of electrostatically attracting the plasma from the etchant gas comprises the step of biasing a chuck supporting the substrate to a bias power between -10 and -1,000 volts, and wherein the step of electrostatically attracting the plasma from the etch mask stripping gas comprises the step of biasing the chuck supporting the substrate to a bias power between -10 and -1,000 volts.

12. The method, as recited in claim 4, further comprising the step of maintaining a pressure between 1 and 80 millitorr during the etching and stripping steps.

13. The method, as recited in claim 12, further comprising the step of maintaining the substrate at a temperature between 10° and 100° C during the etching and stripping steps.

14. The method, as recited in claim 13, wherein the step of electrostatically attracting the plasma from the etchant gas comprises the step of biasing a chuck supporting the substrate to a bias power between -10 and -1,000 volts and wherein the step of electrostatically attracting the plasma from the etch mask stripping gas comprises the step of biasing the chuck supporting the substrate to a bias power between -10 and -1,000 volts.

15. A method for etching at least partially through a metal-containing layer disposed above a substrate, wherein part of said metal-containing layer is disposed below an etch mask and part of said metal-containing layer is not disposed below the etch mask, comprising the steps of:

placing the substrate in the etch chamber;

etching away parts of the metal-containing layer not disposed below the etch mask, wherein some of the etched away parts of the metal-containing layer is redeposited to form residual sidewall passivation on the substrate, while the substrate is in the etch chamber;

stripping away the etch mask and removing some sidewall passivation while the substrate is in the etch chamber; and

removing the substrate from the etch chamber.

16. An apparatus for etching at least partially through a metal-containing layer disposed above a substrate, wherein part of said metal-containing layer is disposed below an etch mask and part of said metal-containing layer is not disposed below the etch mask, comprising:

means for placing the substrate in an etch chamber;

means for flowing an etchant gas into the etch chamber;

means for creating a plasma from the etchant gas in the etch chamber;

means for etching away parts of the metal-containing layer not disposed below the etch mask, wherein some of the etched away parts of the metal-containing layer are redeposited to form residual sidewall passivation while the substrate is in the etch chamber;

means for discontinuing the flow of the etchant gas into the etch chamber;

means for flowing an etch mask stripping gas into the etch chamber;

means for creating a plasma from the etch mask stripping gas in the etch chamber;

means for stripping away the etch mask and removing some residual sidewall passivation, while the substrate is in the etch chamber; and

means for removing the substrate from the etch chamber.

17. The method, as recited in claim 1, wherein the stripping away comprises removing parts of the metal-containing layer that are redeposited to form residual sidewall passivation.

18. The method, as recited in claim 1, wherein the stripping away comprises accelerating oxygen plasma to the substrate to remove parts of the metal-containing layer that are redeposited to form residual sidewall passivation.